

## HEALTH

## HEALTH BRIEFS

**BREAKFAST IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN,  
CAN AFFECT PERFORMANCE**

Children need their morning meal to prepare for a day of hitting the books. "Children who eat breakfast get a head start on essential daily nutrients because the morning meal provides one-fourth to one-third of the day's energy and nutrient needs," said Dr. Janice Stuff at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. She said eating breakfast will help a child's classroom behavior, overall attitude and mental and physical performance in school. Some tips for a healthy breakfast include eating: dairy products such as low-fat milk or yogurt; grains which can be found in high-fiber bread or a cereal; proteins, common in peanut butter, cheese or a lean cut of meat; and fruit or drinking 100 percent fruit juice.

**WATCH OUT WHEN 'SUPERSIZING'  
YOUR FAST-FOOD MEALS**

Supersizing your fast-food order may be a better value, but it may not be what you bargained for in terms of your health. "Buying an order of large fries and a 32-ounce cola instead of an order of small fries and a 12-ounce soft drink may cost only a few cents more, but your caloric intake in most cases will almost double," said Dr. John Foreyt, professor of medicine and director of the Behavioral Modification Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Ordering large portions of food at inexpensive prices is tempting, but the real key to proper diet is making sensible food choices, Foreyt said.

**SOME FATS IN YOUR DIET ARE  
NEEDED TO MAINTAIN LIFE**

Believe it or not, some fat in your diet is good for you. "Certain dietary fats are essential to maintaining life," said Lynne Scott, a registered dietitian and director of the DeBakey Heart Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Fat has several important functions in the body. It is the most dense source of calories, providing more than twice the calories of carbohydrates or protein. Fat spares protein so that protein can be used to build and repair instead of being used for energy. Fat also helps with absorption of vitamins A, D, E and K. The American Heart Association recommends a diet with no more than 30 percent of calories from fat. Choose foods that have three grams of fat or less per serving. Don't mistake fat-free foods for calorie-free foods as some brands of fat-free foods are higher in calories than regular foods.

**CLOSING IN ON A  
HEART-DISEASE GENE**

More than one gene may be responsible for familial dilated cardiomyopathy, a leading cause of heart transplantation and cardiac death. Researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston have located a chromosomal site for one of the genes. In one family studied, a gene for FDCM was located on chromosome 10, but the actual gene has not yet been identified. "The site of the long arm of chromosome 10 known as 10q21-q23 contained several candidate genes, including muscle membrane proteins, energy-producing proteins and proteins involved in energy transport," said Dr. Jeffrey A. Towbin of Baylor. Familial dilated cardiomyopathy causes a reduction in the force of heart contractions. With FDCM, the walls of the heart dilate or balloon out under pressure, due to abnormal contractile activity in the heart muscle. The disorder is a major form of inherited heart disease and can be fatal.

**TESTICULAR SELF-EXAM  
IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG MEN**

Self-examination is a first step in a young man's guarding against testicular cancer. Cancer of the testicles can occur any time after the age of 15 but is most common between 20 and 35. It is four times more common among whites than blacks, said Dr. Seth P. Lerner, a urologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. The best time to do a monthly self-exam is after a warm shower when heat has caused the scrotum to relax. Use both hands to gently examine each testicle, placing the index and middle fingers beneath the testicle and the thumbs on top. Feel for any abnormal lumps, which are usually painless. Lerner cautions that men should not confuse a lump with the epididymis, a cord-like structure on the top and back of the testicle that stores and transports sperm. "If you feel an abnormal lump, contact your physician right away," Lerner said.

**Talking to doctor may improve health***Special to Sentinel-Voice*

According to a recently released survey, more than 90 percent of America's doctors say that many serious medical problems could be avoided if patients were more willing to talk about their medical condition.

The survey of 1,000 consumers and 250 doctors is part of a campaign led by former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, M.D., to uncover the reason why patients and their health care providers often have a hard time talking to one another and to see how the lack of communication affects a

patient's health.

The survey showed that embarrassment, lack of time and fear of bad news were the major obstacles to communication.

One-fourth of the consumers surveyed admitted that embarrassment kept them from talking to their doctor about a medical problem.

One in eight adults (13 percent) reported they had not talked with a doctor about a health problem because they were afraid of getting bad news. One in five consumers (17 percent) had not talked with a physician about a troubling medical concern because the

doctor seemed rushed.

In the survey, these communication difficulties were common whenever the concern focused on a sensitive health issue, such as bladder control or mental illness.

According to Koop, "Open, comfortable discussion between patients and their physicians is the only way to effectively deal with health concerns, especially those involving sensitive matters."

Koop, along with other health leaders, has launched a public awareness campaign titled Take Time To Talk, to improve communication between patients and their

physicians.

"Better communication will ultimately improve the level of health and the quality of life in the U.S.," he said.

The public awareness campaign includes a free Take Time To Talk brochure to help patients, doctors or other health care providers like nurses and physician assistants overcome communication barriers.

The brochure provides helpful information, including tips and guidelines for improving discussion between patients and physicians.

For a free copy of the brochure, or more information, call 1-800-931-3321.

*Simple precautions during summer activities can prevent hearing loss, advises national association**Special to Sentinel-Voice*

Although summer is a time for fun with friends and for family celebrations, many summertime activities can endanger your hearing health. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) warns that exposure to extremely loud noises such as lawn mowers, fireworks, rock concerts, power boating, and other loud recreational activities can permanently damage hearing.

"Noise-induced hearing loss is usually gradual and painless, but unfortunately, permanent," said Vic Gladstone, Ph.D., ASHA's associate director for audiology. "However, even a one-time exposure to extremely loud noise, like a firecracker for example, can cause permanent hearing loss."

Knowing what noises can cause damage is important. Prolonged or repeated

exposure to any noise above 85 decibels can cause hearing loss.

Most lawn mowers, motorcycles, chainsaws, and powerboats produce noise at or above 85 decibels. Personal stereos may account for the highest source of noise-induced hearing loss — sound from personal stereos has been measured at levels as high as 110 decibels.

Permanent hearing loss can occur from exposure to impulse noise at or above 140 decibels, this includes some rock concerts and firecrackers.

To protect your hearing this summer, ASHA recommends the following tips:

- Wear hearing protectors such as ear plugs during fireworks and when attending concerts. *Using cotton in your ears does not block sound.*

- Turn down the volume on stereos and personal listening systems.

**Migraine treatments provide options for relief***Special to Sentinel-Voice*

HOUSTON — Nasal sprays, pills or injections are providing migraine sufferers options for stopping headaches.

"These newer medications do not prevent migraines but can stop one that is beginning," said Dr. Howard Derman, director of The Headache Clinic at Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital in Houston.

Migraines are characterized by pain on one side usually over the eye or cheek, nausea or vomiting and sensitivity to light. Most migraines last from two to four hours and occur primarily in women.

During migraines, blood vessels in the brain experience

a sterile inflammation and spasm. This activity occurs at the point where nerves from pain centers connect to the blood vessels. Researchers believe that a brain chemical, called substance P, regulates the inflammation.

"We know that a brain chemical, serotonin, effects substance P, so these newer migraine medications to attack substance P directly."

Knowledge of a patient's migraine history is essential for determining which medication to prescribe.

"If the patient has a warning the headache is coming, such as seeing flashing lights or wiggly lines, then a medicine that takes longer to react is

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